



Surcharge to help Lyon water company solve arsenic problem

Karen Woodmansee

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Customers of Crystal Clear Water Co. Inc. of Yerington will have to pay a \$26 monthly surcharge per customer beginning today to pay for an arsenic removal system, but won't be hit with a proposed \$76 monthly charge for bottled water.

The company was unable to meet the new Environmental Protection Agency's arsenic standard in drinking water of 10 parts per billion, from a previous standard of 50 parts per billion. The new standard went into effect last week.

Crystal Clear Water's naturally occurring arsenic level is at 44 parts per billion.

Kristy Wahl, public information officer for the Nevada Public Utility Commission, said the company has three years to get its arsenic level down to EPA standards and can forgo the need for bottled water.

"EPA said they don't have to resort to bottled water, they can still drink the regular water," she said.

Diane Brandt, who with her husband, Bill, owns the water company and lives in the same area as their customers, said they're having difficulty because as a private company, they don't qualify for any government grants or loans.

"Right now we have a possibility of selling the company," she said. "But I really don't know what's going to happen."

A Public Utility Commission consumer session is slated for 6 p.m. Feb. 9 in Yerington.

Brandt said the process for installing the arsenic-removal system has already begun, thanks to the surcharge.

Crystal Clear Water services Southview Estates and El Rancho Estates, about seven miles north of Yerington.

"It's going to be a hardship on this community because we have a lot of retired people on fixed incomes," she said. "But we're in the same situation, we have to pay our bills, too."

Options for the company include the Brandts keeping the company and trying to work through the difficulties; selling the company; Lyon County taking over services; or the company being placed in receivership by the district court.

Mike Workman, Lyon County utilities director, said he would not be able to take it over.

"I can't service that area from Dayton," he said. "I don't know what we'll do if it lands in the county's lap."

The formation of a general improvement district is also a possibility. GIDs can apply for government grants and loans to cover costs of capital improvements.

Brandt praised the Public Utility Commission staff for their assistance.

"They have been wonderful, they've worked with us and they're trying everything they can," she said.

-- Contact reporter Karen Woodmansee at kwoodmansee@nevadaappeal.com or 882-2111, ext. 351.

If you go

WHAT: Public Utilities Commission consumer session on Crystal Clear Water Co. Inc.

WHEN: 6 p.m. Feb. 9

WHERE: 27 S. Main St., Yerington

CALL: (775) 684-6113

[BACK](#) 